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hit comics in many years. the industry doesn't deserve him."

— marlin wagner

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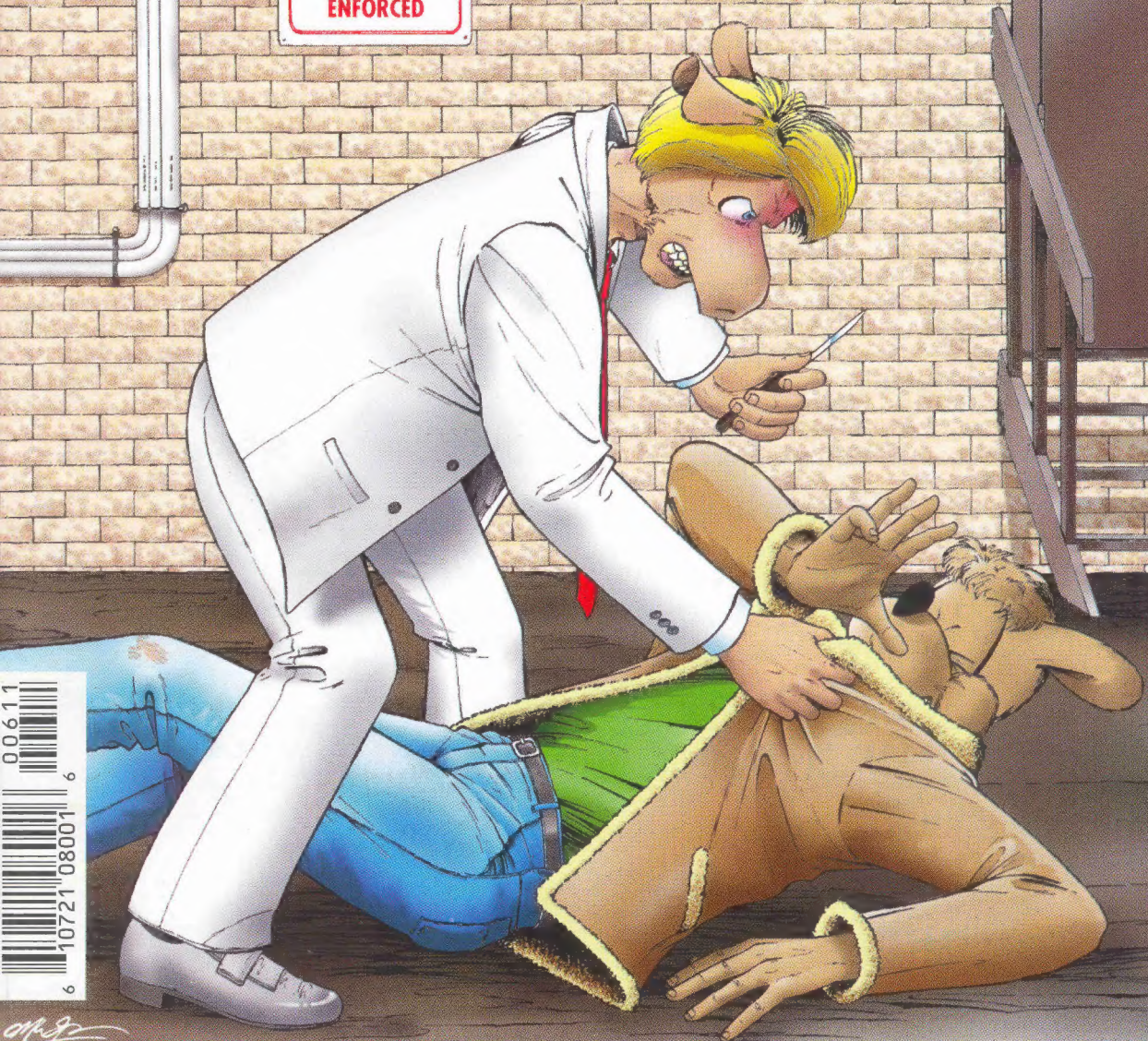
"Tender, elaborate, riotous and unmanly, Walter Holcombe's expert cartoons cut to the core of blind human folly.
POOT IS ONE OF THE BEST COMIC BOOKS OF THE YEAR,
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MARTIN WAGNER'S Hepcats

NUMBER 6 JANUARY 1998



M. Wagner
1997

Antarctic Blast

January 1998

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Visit our web site at: <http://www.antarctic-press.com>

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JANUARY 1998 ATTRACTIONS

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Silver Cross #2

Warrior Nun: Frenzy #1

Luftwaffe: 1946 #8

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Hepcats #6

Helter Skelter #5

Foreternity #4

Nosferatu #2 (Venus)

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Happy New Year Resolutions or how I learned to love the coming apocalypse.

by Joeming W. Dunn, MD

Well it's the dawn of a new year. Just think, we're only two years away from the year 2000. I suspect we will start seeing television shows, movies, books and of course comics counting down to this particular event. I am imagining all the changes that will occur during the change over to the new century...like what will happen to all those checks that have "19" in the date and how convention and hotel space will drop to nil as facilities desperately try to accommodate all the parties that will occur. As you can tell, I have a lot of time on my hands. Since it is the new year, you must have new year resolutions. This will begin our 14th year of existence and you'd figure we would have gotten it right by now...but we always strive to improve. We didn't have any resolutions last year...but we did fulfill all our promises from the year earlier (even if they didn't go as smoothly as envisioned).

This year we resolve the following:

Number One...The Larch

Number Two...The Larch

Number Three...we resolve to release our toys on time!

Number Four...we resolve to lower the price on some of our titles!

Number Five...we resolve to expand, not exploit, the comic market!

Number Six...we resolve not to spend all our profits on LASER QUEST!

Number Seven...we resolve to make retailer incentives easier to achieve!

Number Eight...we resolve to lose weight (for the tenth year in a row)!

Number Nine...Number Nine...Number Nine

Number Ten...we resolve not to release ten variant covers!

Number Eleven...No more Nazis! (We didn't say we would keep all our resolutions.)

Number Twelve...we resolve to go to conventions to have a good time!

Number Thirteen...we resolve to draw instead of watching South Park!

Number Fourteen...we resolve to stop buying models that we will never build!

Number Fifteen...we resolve not to overdose on Prozac when Diamond orders come in!

Number Sixteen...we resolve to stop playing Panzer General on company time!

Number Seventeen...NO MORE STAR WARS - EMPIRE STRIKES BACK arguments!

Number Eighteen...we resolve to continue to buy APPLE computers!

Number Nineteen...The average age of a soldier killed in Vietnam.

Number Twenty...we resolve to stay around for twenty years!

Well, those are our resolutions for this year...come back next year to see if any of them have been kept. We have many good things happening this year, including action figures based on CHEETAH, USAGI YOJIMBO, LILLITH, ALLEY OOP, FLAMING CARROT, AMERICAN WOMAN, LUFTWAFFE: 1946 and STARGODS. We also have the following comic releases this year: SHOTGUN MARY regular series by Herb Mallette and Kelsey Shannon, STARGODS by Image and Marvel artist Scott Clark and DC artist Dean Zachery (which will be printed under the CONQUEST STUDIOS imprint), AMERICAN WOMAN by Warrior Nun artist Brian Denham, and ALLEY OOP by Jack Bender and Dan Davis ... not to mention a ton more ROBOTECH comics, and planned monthly schedules for WARRIOR NUN AREALA and WARRIOR NUN BLACK & WHITE! We also will have special "months" for GOLD DIGGER, HEPCATS, LUFTWAFFE, and NINJA HIGH SCHOOL which will have merchandise and product specifically geared for those fans. Let's see how the new year shapes up!

FOR THE LOCATION OF YOUR NEAREST COMIC STORE CALL 1-888-COMICBOOK

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HAPPY FUGGIN' NEW YEAR

And we're grateful to all you Hepfans who've waited patiently during our decision to resolicit starting this month. But...*(gasp)*...it's come to our attention that some of you still have not ordered copies of RADIO HEPCATS! Well, what's up with that? It would have been the perfect CD to jam to while waiting for this issue to hit the racks. But hey, don't take our word for it. Read this review by Dann Chinn that appeared in the e-zine *Misfit City on the World Wide Web*. Thanks, Dann! Then, if you're as blown away by this as Martin was, hurry your order in today—otherwise, we'll have to tell everyone you know that you secretly listen to Hanson.

Can you can imagine a sort of cross between *Friends* and a pre-job market *This Life*, in which all the characters appear to be played by close relatives of those odd, unclassifiable, button-nosed mammals (what the hell were they, then? bear/possum crossbreeds? doughboys?) who got perpetually stuck with the supporting roles in Disney Club comics? Then you'll have a fair, if reductionist, idea of Martin Wagner's ongoing graphic novel *Hepcats*. Along with its darker and more tragic sister-strip *Snowblind*, this warm, witty, compassionate and beautifully drawn adult strip—set on the campus of the University of Texas—follows the fortunes of a small group of students (Erica, Joey, Gunther, and Arnie) and their perpetual struggle of balancing friendships and growing maturity with an acceptable level of fun and the freedom to make mistakes. Sounds familiar? In Martin's hands it's both recognisable and sparkling.

Currently celebrating a new linkup with Antarctic Press and the consequent release from the headaches and pitfalls of self-publishing, Martin's just expanded the *Hepcats* world by releasing the first in a set of companion CDs: not so much a *Hepcats* soundtrack as just a set of, as Martin puts it, "damn good songs that seem right at home with Erica and the gang." But if you're expecting another college beerkeg singalong album, think again. Despite the tendency of the *Hepcats* cast for animated chat as opposed to holing up in their bedrooms brooding over a Walkman, there's a strong whiff of dark-toned, filigreed, 4AD-style introspection to this compilation. It's the tendency of the bands involved to spice their music with a little darkness, a little ornateness: and as a result *Radio Hepcats* is generally closer to the sombre and unsettling shades of *Snowblind* than the lively sunwashed tints of *Hepcats* itself. Green Day's pogo party this ain't: it's more like Ivo Watts-Russell's children coming home to roost.

Explicitly, sometimes. The Curtain Society's waltzing "Ferris Wheel" has that familiar sound of twangling Cocteau Twins bass and grumbling spiky washes of guitar under the melancholic push-and-pull vocals. More of those queasy, giggling, Robin Guthrie-ish guitars show up on Siddal's "Secrets Of The Blind," a two-parter that swings unexpectedly from chirpy drunken fairy-pop into one of those Cocteaus alien-piano ballads that dislocate you from your own consciousness. And if you've ever wondered what a troubled hermit's answer to the arresting, barren grandeur of Dead Can Dance might be like, look no further than Soul Whirling Somewhere. "Unhittable"—utterly isolated and beautiful darkwave—drifts up as if from the bottom of a well: Michael Planter's ashy, yearning voice floating out from its shrouds of tolling Joy Division bass and dark persuasive ambience, which caress and pull it down like water saturating the clothes of a drowner. It lulls you with sepulchral beauty while draining the warmth out of the room; you can all but see ice forming on the speakers.

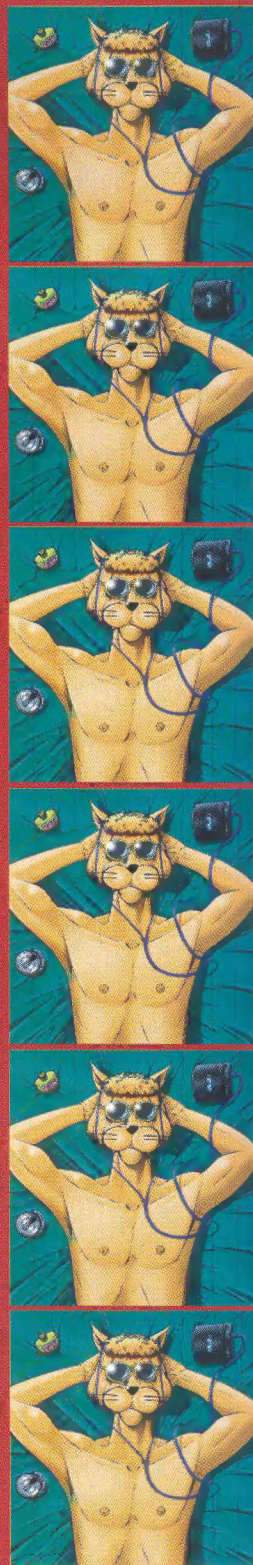
But let's not nitpick. Even if the 4AD pointers can sometimes be pretty self-evident, this is—at the very least—an album of heady, winning underground music. They might have some obvious forebears, but the bands on *Radio Hepcats* also possess persuasive and seductive sounds, which are especially welcome in the current atmosphere of half-asleep indie and heritage Britpop. With "The Red Dots," An April March plunge down into their own thunderous take on guitar-heavy dream-pop with enough force to squish any of their British shoegazer ancestors (Chapterhouse, Slowdive). This stuff rides on a natural internal dynamic as much as on any phaser pedal setting, and coasts in on a dark thrum of guitar as impersonal and unstoppable as a typhoon.

And Martin's offered us the odd surprise, too. Visible Shivers have the sort of name to suggest more of the same chilly darkwave as Soul Whirling Somewhere but prove, in fact, to have the same sort of Southern States nerviness as their near brothers-in-name, Shudder To Think. Lo-fi country-flavoured twelve-string jangle-pop, complete with plaintive harmonica and plonky bass, which on "After Glory" prances closer to the Appalachian chirp of Robbie Robertson, Dr Hook or Fables...era REM than to the stonework artiness of much of the rest of the *Radio Hepcats* broadcast. Then there's William McGinney's *Hepcats*-themed snatch of filmic lo-fi piano-and-synthwork, halfway between *Knots Landing* and Angelo Badalamenti. And to silence any remaining doubts, there's two more bands on here—the shimmeringly lovely Mistle Thrush and the ever-magnificent No-Man—who transcend genrework altogether.

Mistle Thrush open the CD with a soulful seduction, giving us "Wake Up (The Sleep Song)." First it curls into our hearts like a gorgeously soporific Julee Cruise ballad, and then suddenly expands into a huge cathedralline Bark Psychosis space where Valerie Fargione's voice strips itself of anxious sugar and powers up into a huge, majestic Patsy Cline alto, as if the lump in our throats has finally gulped them into a place more fit for their bewitching talents. Further on, No-Man provide two wildly different and divergent contributions: the industrial, near-incomprehensible clatter-pop of "Infant Phenomenon" (which powers along on a rattling log-drum beat, offensively dirty guitars and gasped, abstract lyrics), and the all-embracing Steve Reich-ian trance-funk of "Heaven Taste"; a sweetly slumbering twenty-plus minute ambient monster with a bellyful of twinkling lights, sky-tickling violin, leviathan Mick Karn bass and perhaps a couple of bites of Chartres Cathedral.

Martin Wagner's not only compiled a beautifully paced compilation album, he's also given much-deserved space to a clutch of very under-regarded bands. And the latest activity on the *Hepcats* site suggests that an even more captivating follow-up compilation is on the way. The whole *Hepcats* affair, both on and off record, is looking like a series well worth tuning in to. Cool for cats and everyone else.

© 1997 by DANN CHINN



All right, you heard the man; it's us or Michael Bolton. Send **\$13.00** check/m.o. to **Martin Wagner, PO Box 27157, Austin, TX 78755-2157**. Your coolness is counting on you.

HEPCATS web pages maintained by Denise Voskuil-Marré

<http://www.mcs.net/~dvoskuil/hepcats/> Mirror <http://www.eden.com/hepcats/>

MISFIT CITY <http://webworlds.net/os/misfitcity/>

Hepcats Snowblind

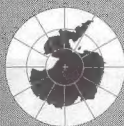
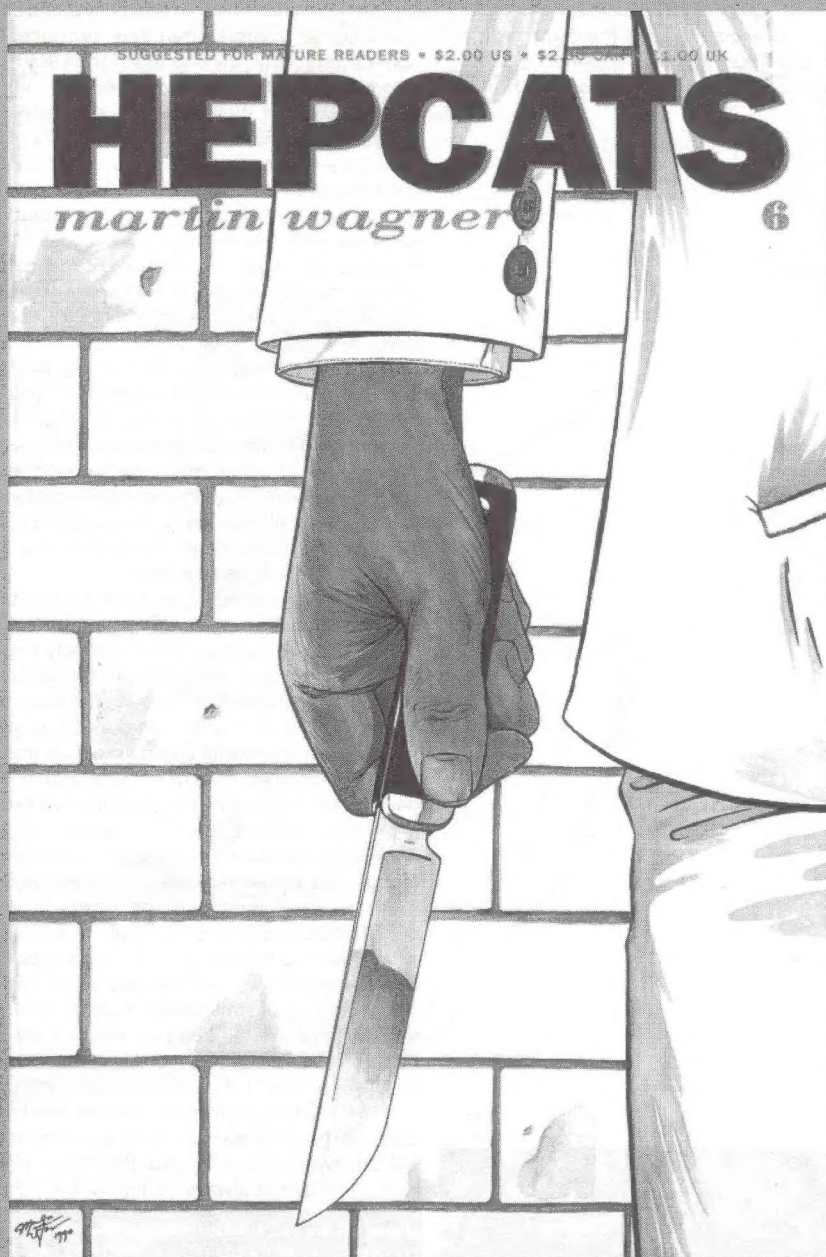
CREATED, WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY
MARTIN WAGNER

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY
DOUBLE DIAMOND PRESS, OCTOBER 1990

WAY OF THE WORLD PROLOGUE
DRAWN AT RHINOCEROS STUDIOS,
AUSTIN, TEXAS, SUMMER 1997

ISSUE NUMBER 6
JANUARY 1998

Chapter 4 Straight, No Chaser



ANTARCTIC PRESS
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

HEPCATS 6

CREATOR'S COMMENTARY TO 1998 EDITION

(These introductions are provided by Martin Wagner as exclusives to the Antarctic Press reprints of *Hepcats*' first 12 issues. We recommend you read them after reading the story, so as to avoid spoilers.)



Me & Nova on Caddo Lake, Texas, summer 1997. Don't really think I intended to flash the camera quite this brazenly; just happened, I guess.
Photo by Hollye.

This issue is better than #5, I think, though I also think that my work at this phase was still being heavily informed by the confusing soap opera of my marriage, and in some areas the narrative of *Snowblind* is reflecting this confusion, particularly in the passages where Arnie is expressing his "what the hell is going on?" frustrations toward Erica. Apart from that, I don't have any specific memories about this issue and the circumstances that went into its production, other than that I was working very, very hard at this point in an effort to take my mind off my personal and career problems. At the time, the mere fact this issue came out at all was nothing short of miraculous. Issue #5 had come out by the good graces of Hepfans. This issue appeared five months afterward and pleasantly surprised a lot of people, though it's true that it was at this point the long lag times between issues were beginning.

It is too easy to lay all of the blame and cast all of the criticisms upon a book's creator whenever anything, especially late shipping, goes wrong with a book. Because it is too easy, this is what people do. It seems most fans, and many other people who should know better, are unaware of the unpleasant conditions under which comic creators often must produce. While everyone is aware of independent comics' relatively few success stories (Bill Tucci, Jeff Smith), no one seems to appreciate the fact that most creators, even the industry's most talented, barely earn a living wage for their efforts. In self-publishing, the situation is often worse, as most self-published titles do not sell upwards of 25,000 copies per issue like *Bone* or *Strangers in Paradise*. And so, a comic creator who self-publishes has to deal with the realization that his book could turn very little profit, and might actually even lose money. I remember spelling out the situation a few years ago at a convention for some fan who was giving me the usual "Why is the book always late?" (While this is in some ways flattering, because it means there is a very real interest in your work, it gets a little irksome when people resort to terms like "asshole" and "motherfucker." Personally, I don't make enough money off this to put up with that kind of bullshit.) I said, "Imagine yourself at work. You have a project coming up, and it will take roughly three months out of your life. And you know going in, that when all is said and done and the project is turned in, you're not only going to earn very little money, you could even end up in debt! Now, exactly how motivated would you be to work on it?" The fellow's answer, of course, was that he'd look for another job. Which is exactly what many comic creators ultimately do, sadly. Jim Woodring, the staggering Eisner-nominated talent responsible for *Frank* (Fantagraphics), has told me he's basically put his comics career on the back burner indefinitely in order to work for Microsoft. Why? Because he has a family to support, and the comics industry couldn't be bothered.

So essentially, we have a situation where (in my case particularly) the work is detailed and time-consuming, and then (when I was self-publishing) the money coming in is so meager that it is nearly impossible to pay for printing. All this adds up to a scenario in which it is not altogether surprising that books sometimes fail to ship on time. Some fans don't get this point: that comics are assembled by hand, by human beings who write and draw; they are not toasters or power saws or widgets churned out by robots on an assembly line (insert obligatory Marvel joke here). It seems some readers think of comics as things that magically appear every Wednesday on the "New Arrivals" shelf in their local shop, and they're not informed as to the process of how books get there in the first place. Creators such as myself who don't produce like clockwork, and who find themselves having to explain *How Things Are*, are accused of making excuses. And so it goes.

Ultimately, it comes down to the work. If some fanboy is going to "go postal" because the comic book he wants comes out late, all the rational person can do is shake his head at such a person's pathetic lack of a life. I long ago decided to concentrate on making *Hepcats* a cool comic, well-written and drawn to my personal level of satisfaction. *Quality, not quantity.* Care and effort, not "rush it out to beat the clock." If I end up losing a few sales because the thing isn't as frequent as, say, *TV Guide*, fine. Frankly, a "fan" who calls me nasty names on the Uselessnet for this is a "fan" I don't need, and don't give a damn about. Get the picture?

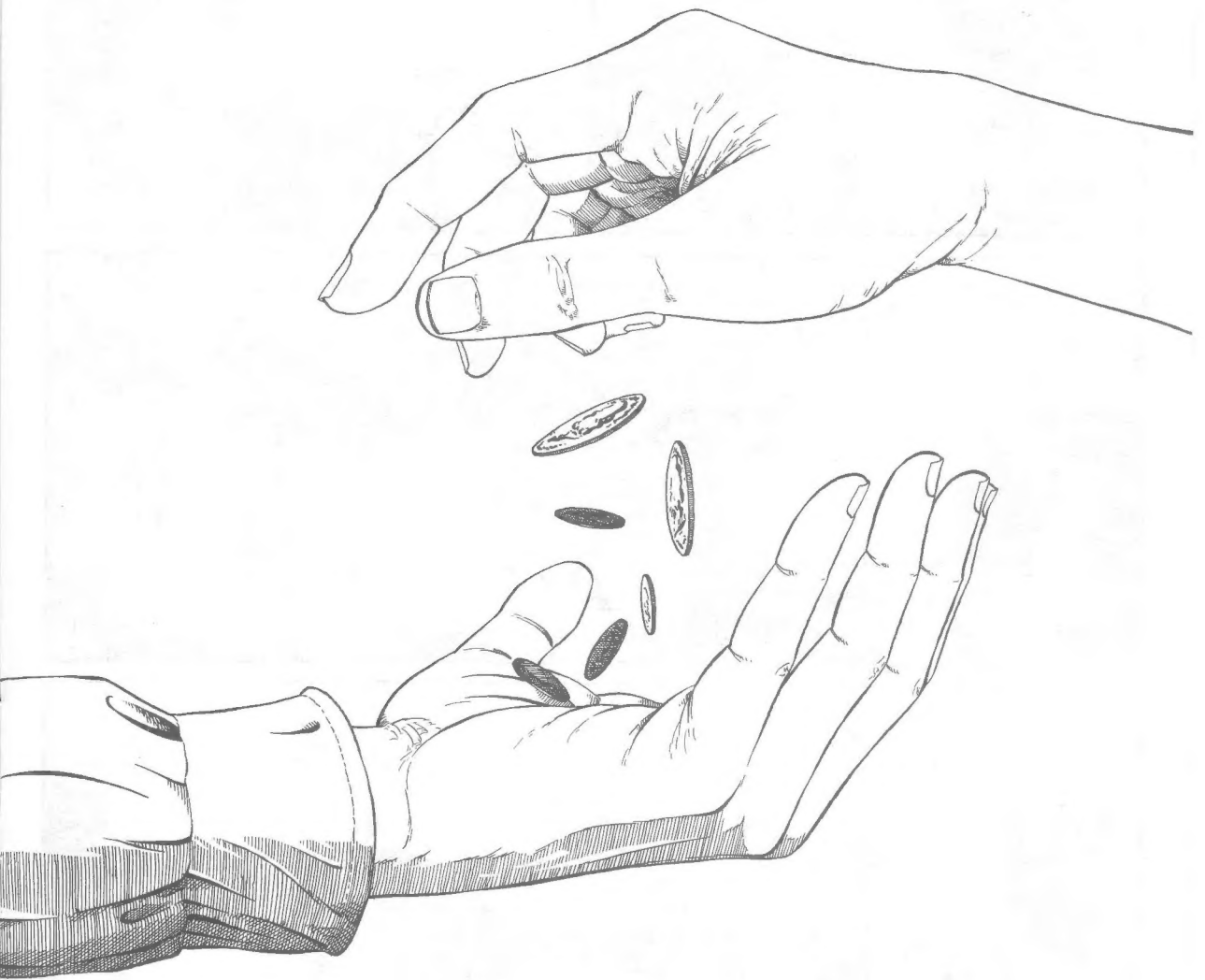
Creators differ. Some can combine excellence with speed. I can't, and don't particularly want to. If all you want is efficiency, many other books out there will satisfy that need for you. But if your priority is artistic excellence, stick around. *Hepcats* may not always be timely, but I promise it'll be good as I can make it!

Now, having just finished the above soapbox, I'd like to apologize to readers for our resolicitation of these reprints, which led to a delay between #5 and #6. Issue #0's lateness (to recap: I was told the colors were done; by 12/1/96 they weren't) had affected the reprint schedule to the point where the May issue was shipping in August, a ludicrous exercise it would have been pointless to continue. So all of us—me, AP, and Diamond—agreed it would be for the best to resolicit and start over. Sorry for the inconvenience.

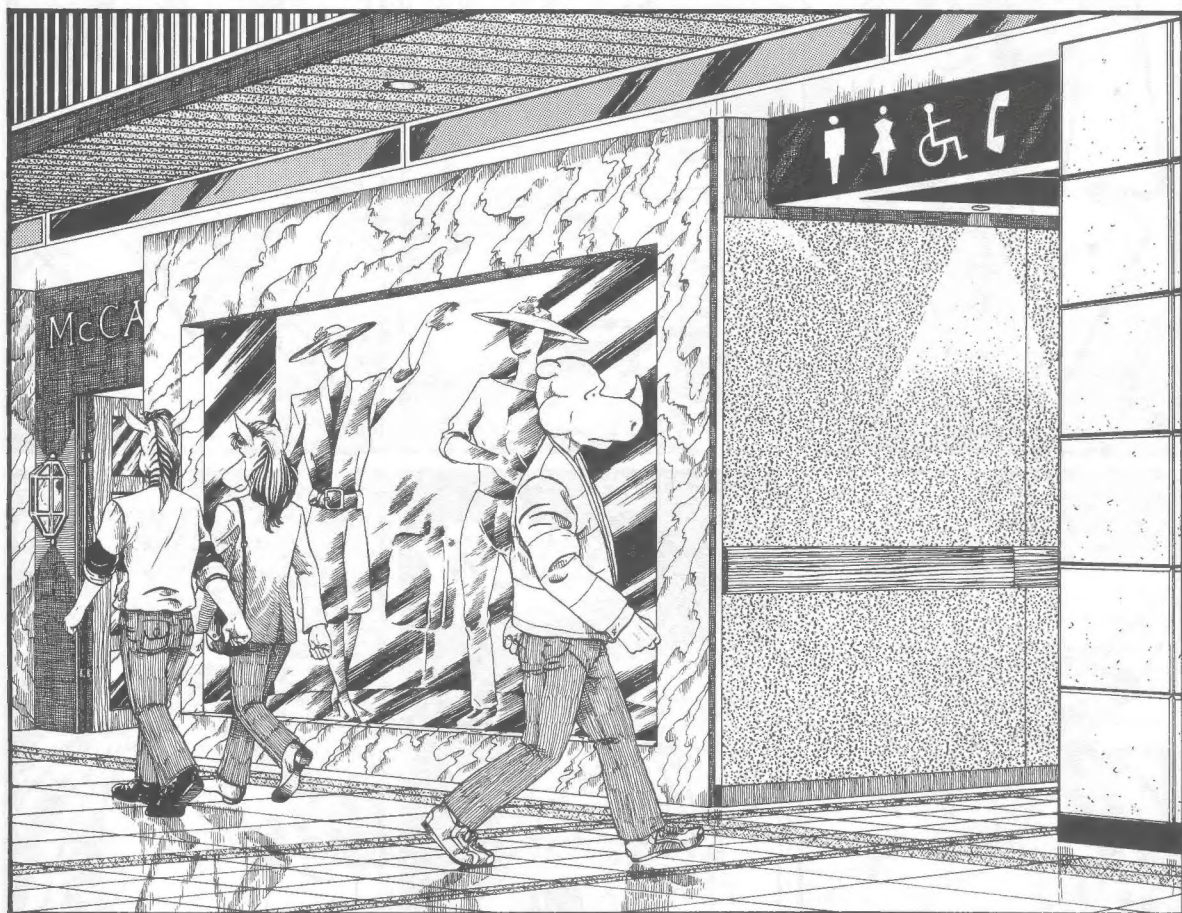
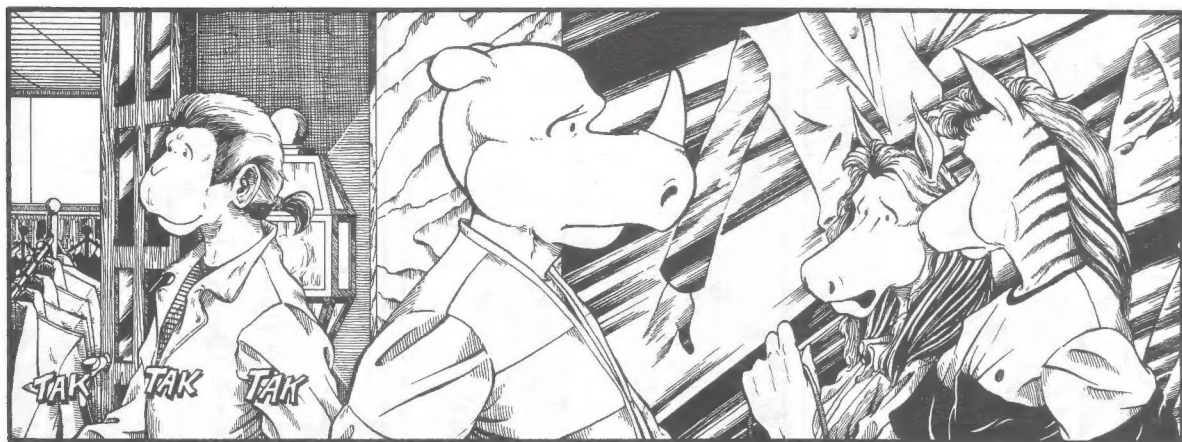
Sign up to the
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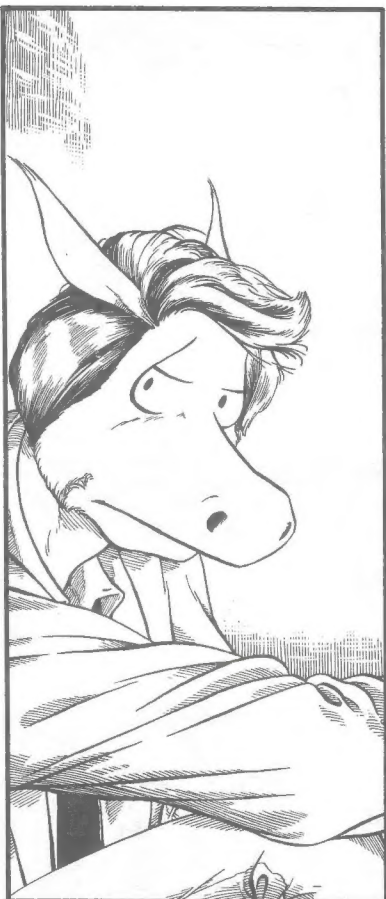
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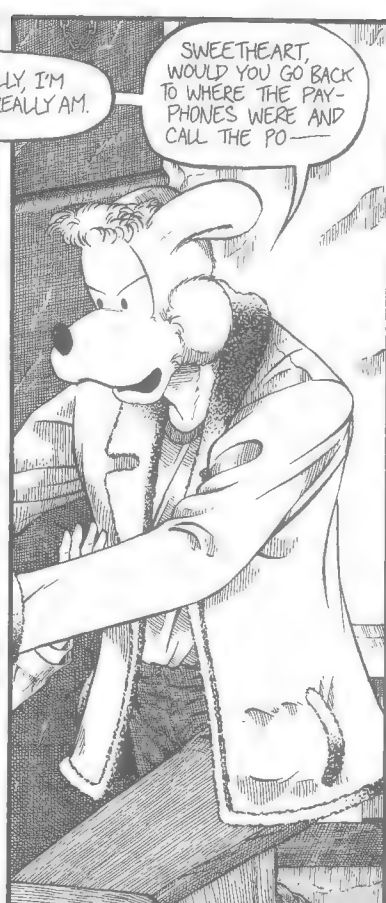
...AND SIXTY-
THREE CENTS
IS YOUR CHANGE.
THANKS A
LOT!

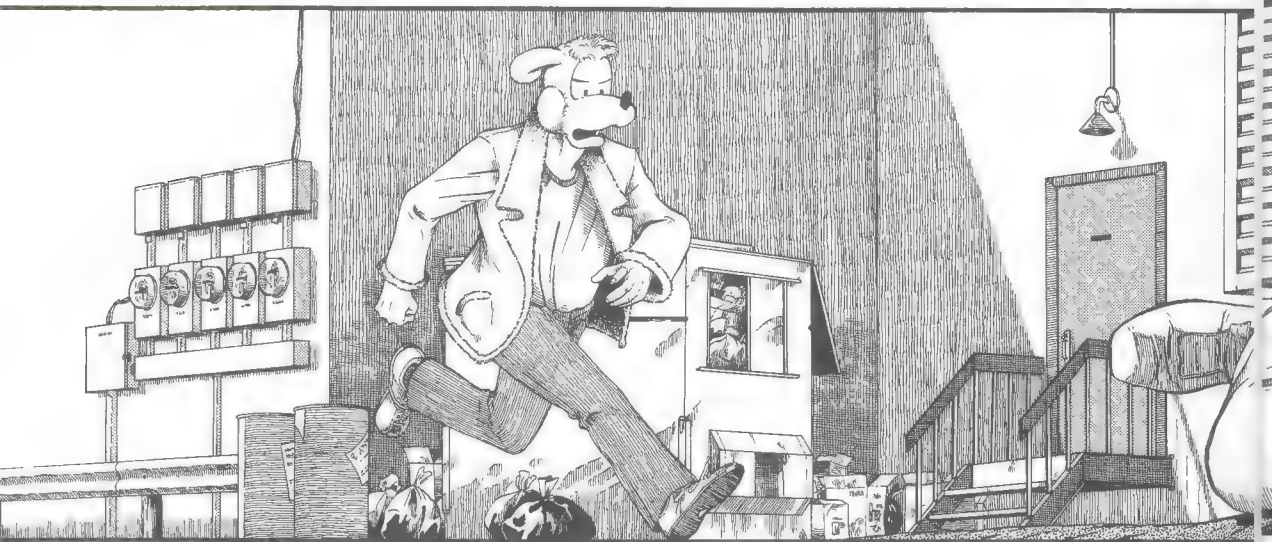
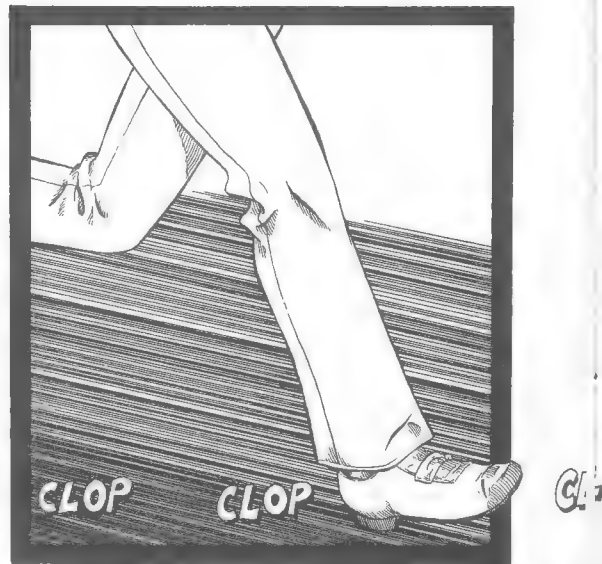












ALL RIGHT,
ALL RIGHT.
WHAT
HAPPENED?

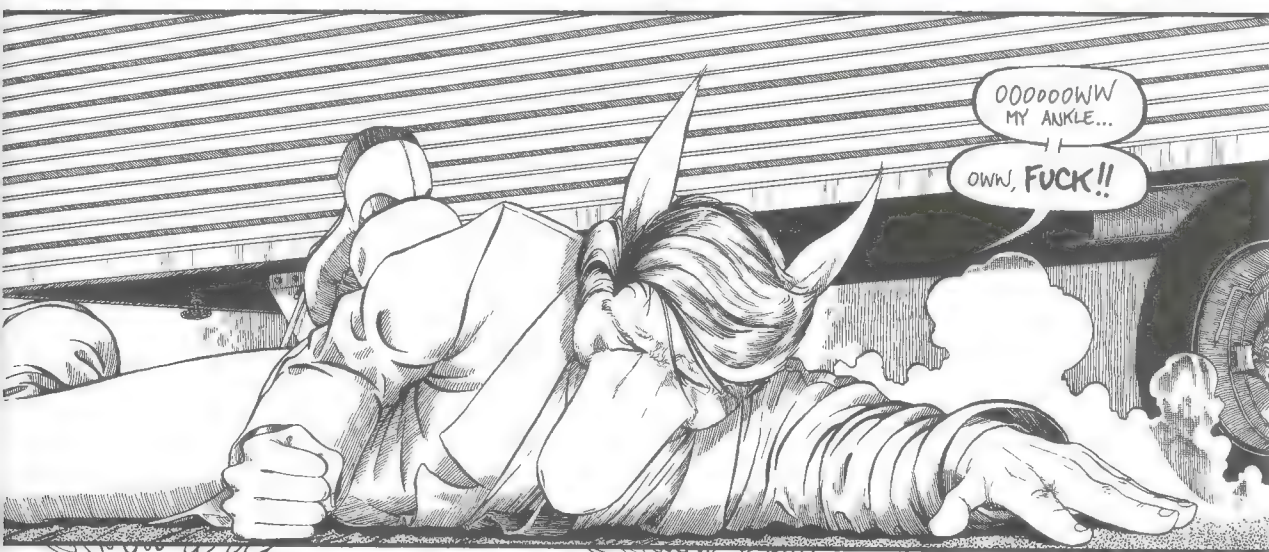


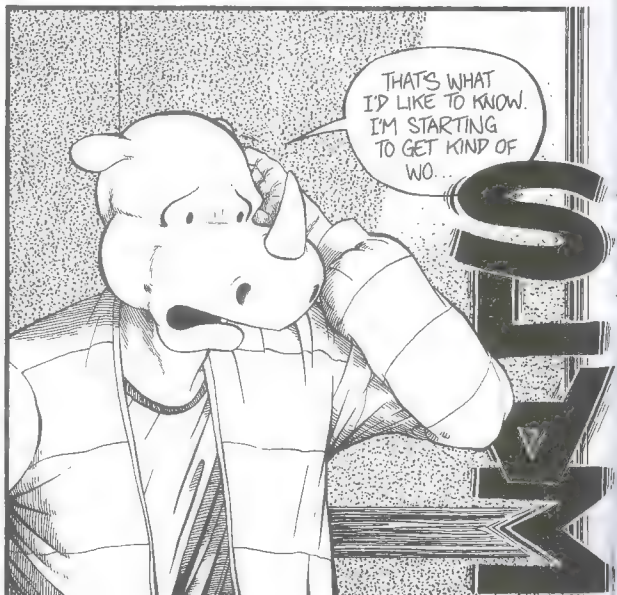
AARRRRRGH!

TWISTED *huff*
TWISTED MY FUCKIN'
ANKLE...

puff:

AW SHIT,
THAT HURTS!



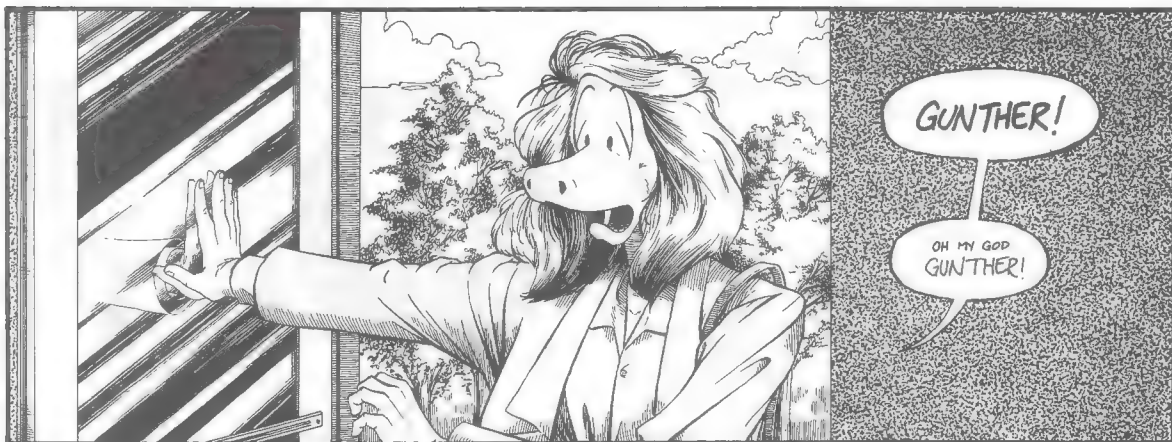






POW





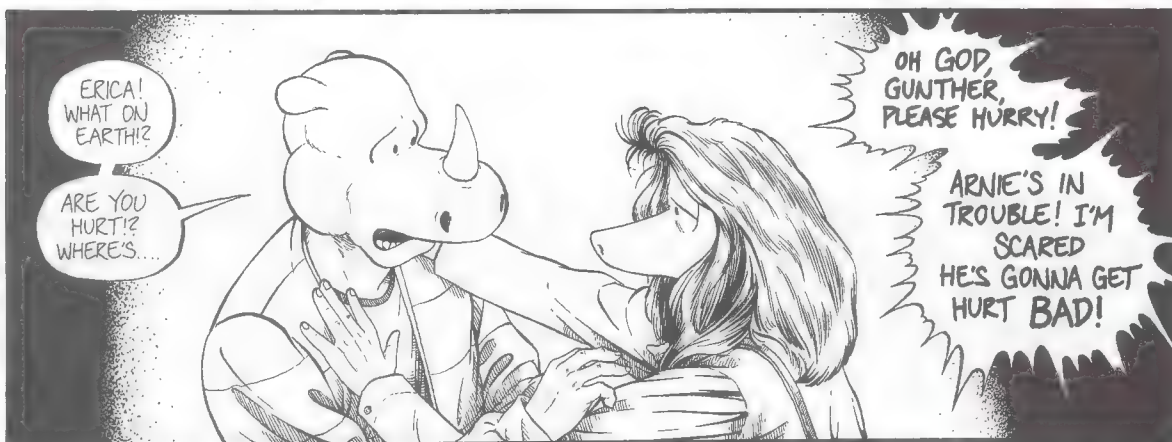
GUNTHER!

OH MY GOD
GUNTHER!



ERICA?...

HOLY
MACKEREL!



ERICA!
WHAT ON
EARTH!?

ARE YOU
HURT!?
WHERE'S...

OH GOD,
GUNTHER,
PLEASE HURRY!

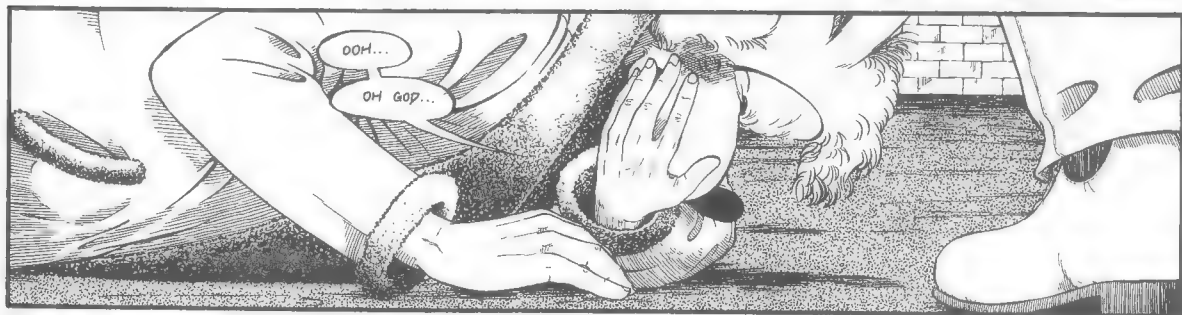
ARNIE'S IN
TROUBLE! I'M
SCARED
HE'S GONNA GET
HURT BAD!

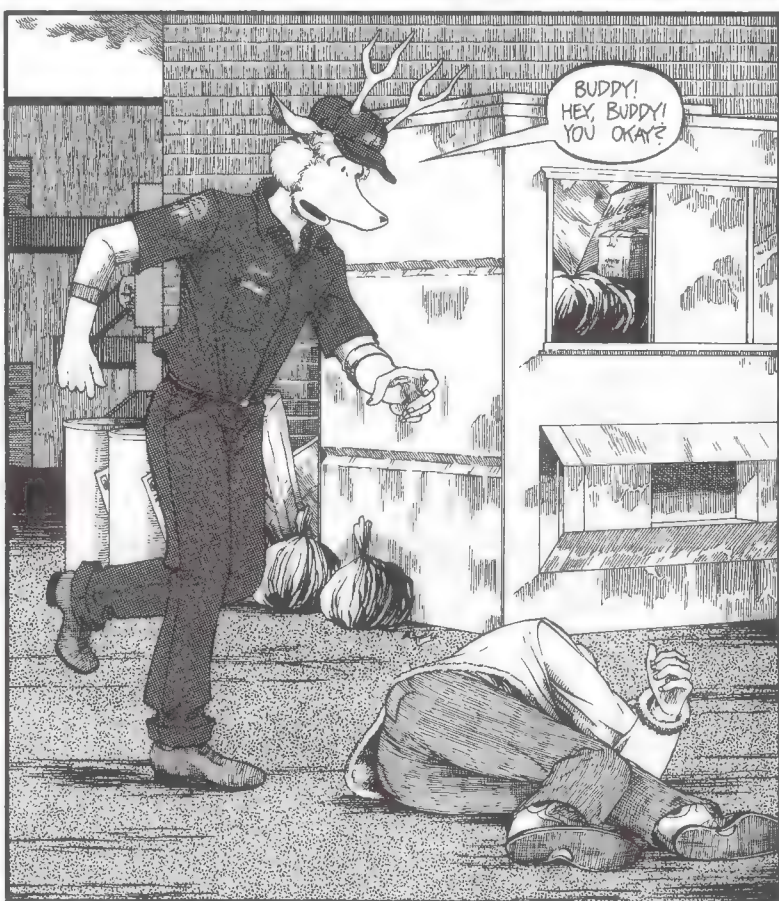
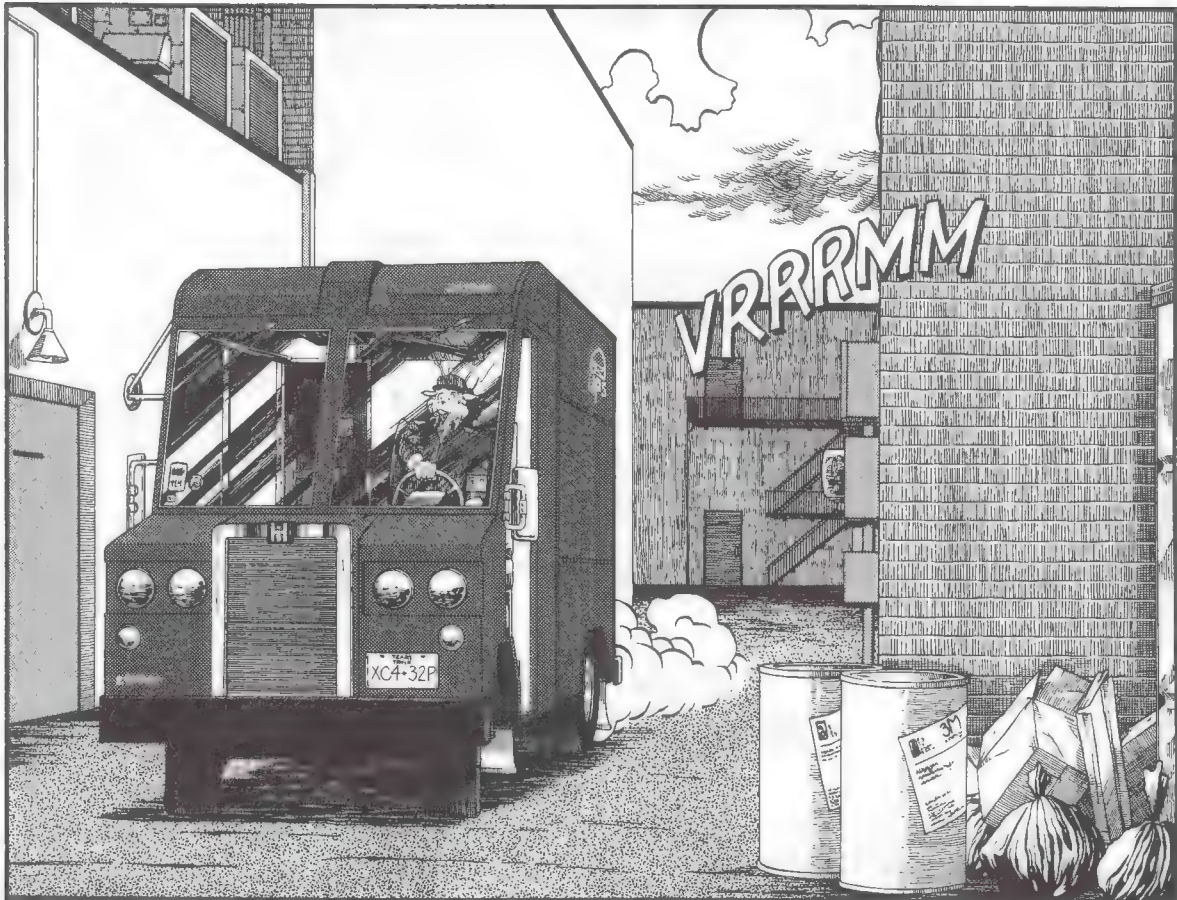


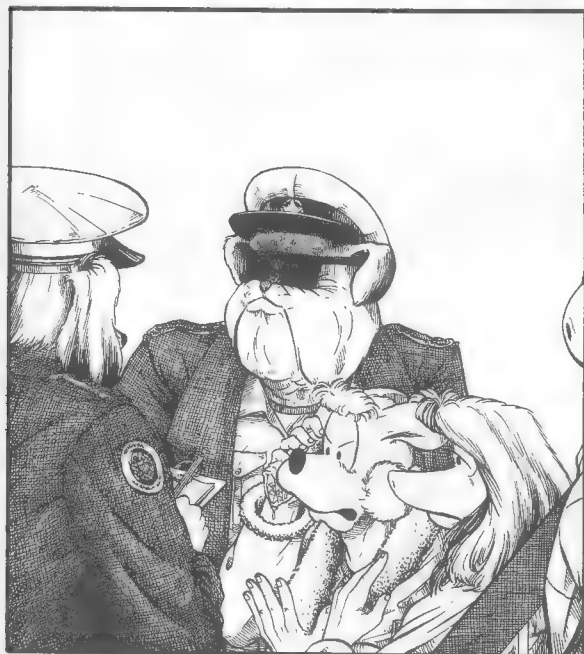
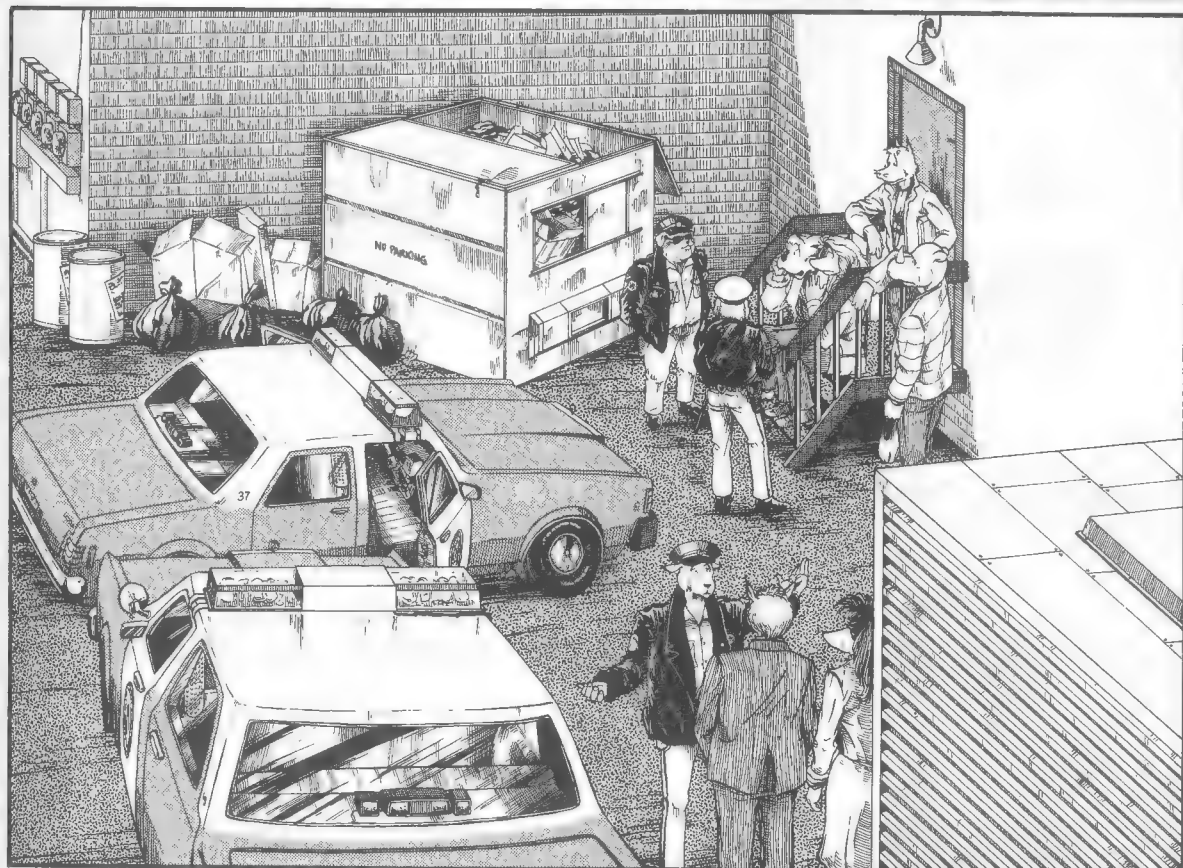
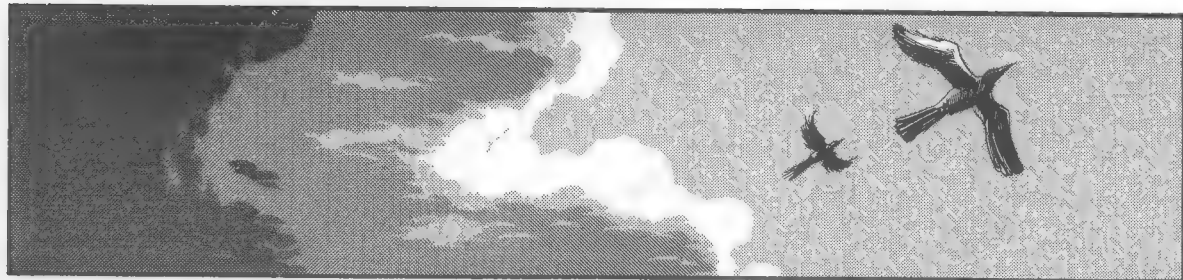
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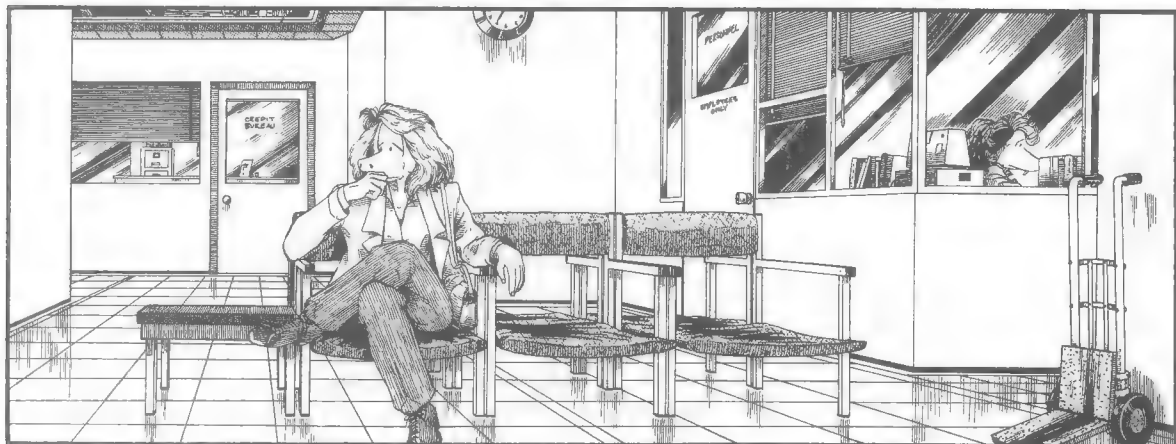
B-BUT
WHA--?

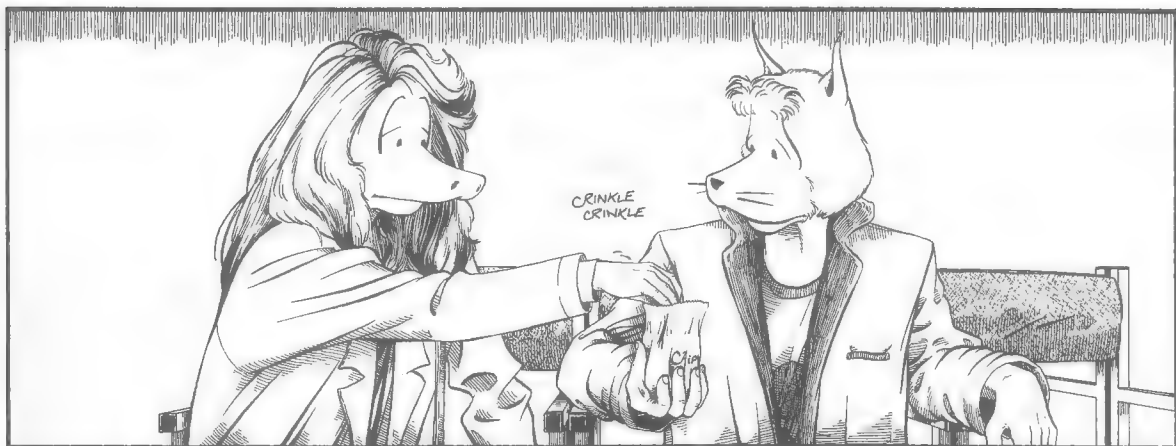
HURRY!

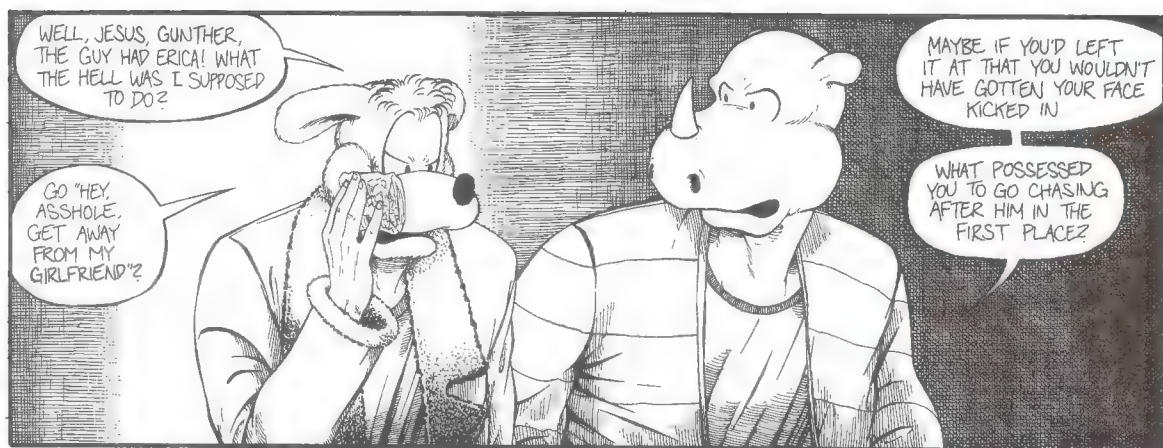




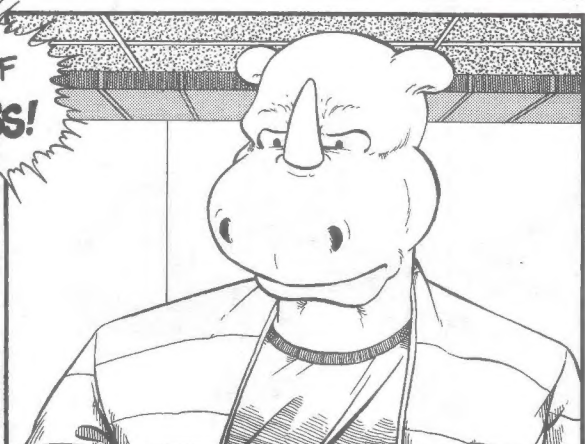
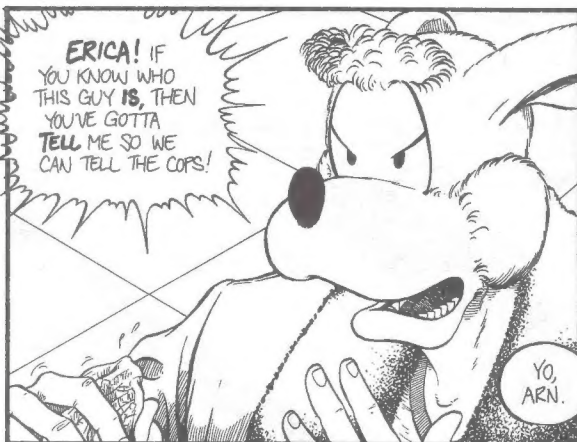
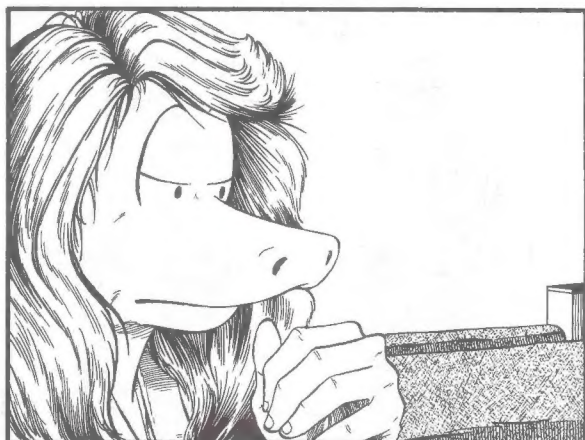


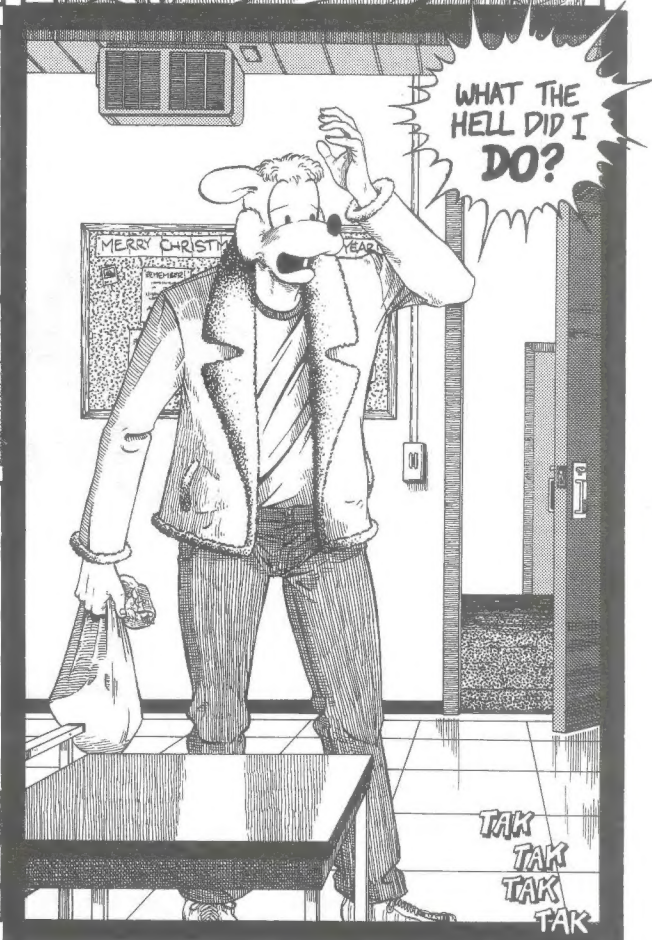
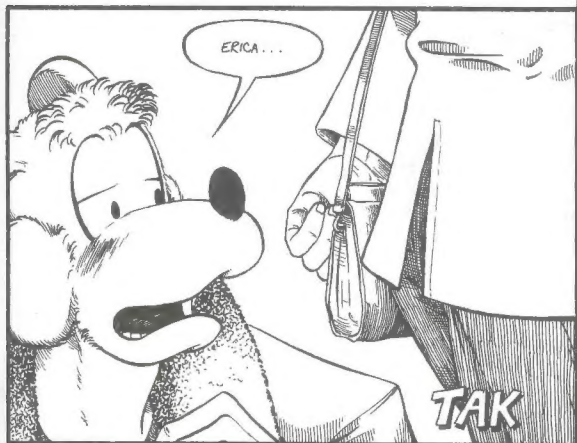
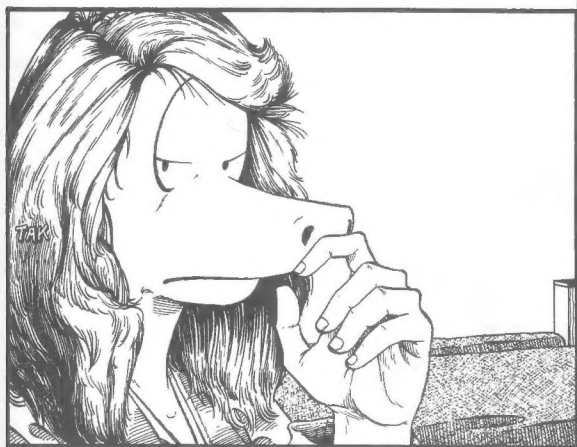












NOTHING, ARNIE.

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

